

# Theatre: Little Flower Blooms Again

## 'Fiorello!' Begins Run at the Broadhurst

By BROOKS ATKINSON

THERE are three ways in which "Fiorello!" is the ideal monument to our beloved Little Flower: it is exciting; it is enjoyable and it is decent.

As put on at the Broadhurst last evening, it recaptures a fabulous political firebrand and a breezy period in the life of New York. Jerome Weidman and George Abbott, old pros in excellent standing, have written the legend of La Guardia's preliminary years in poster style—admiring and enjoying their hero as they go along.

Jerry Bock has set it to a bouncy score that has a satiric line as well as a wonderful waltz of the period, and a good deal of the ingenuity of Frank Loesser's music. As the writer of lyrics, Sheldon Harnick is in an un-faillingly humorous frame of mind.



Tom Bosley, left, Patricia Wilson and Howard Da Silva in a scene from the musical, "Fiorello!" at Broadhurst.

If "Fiorello!" recalls the flaring spirit of "Guys and Dolls" it is partly because the pavements of New York have yielded another racy story and also because Mr. Bock can write with enthusiasm in more than one style. "Little Tin Box" is not his theme song. But it perfectly expresses the festive cynicism of political humbug; and Howard Da Silva's corrosive voice suits it exactly.

Now that Mr. Weidman and Mr. Abbott have raised the curtain it is obvious that La Guardia is a natural subject for musical comedy. Why did no one think of him before? He is extremely well played by Tom Bosley, who is short and a trifle portly, has a kindly face, abundant energy and an explosive personality.

The authors introduce La Guardia in his battered but dedicated law office before World War I when, by personal sympathy and also political guile, he was building a constituency among poor people.

"Fiorello!" takes him into Congress and into the Army, chronicles his first disastrous campaign against Jimmy Walker and pulls down the curtain just as he is undertaking his second and

## The Cast

FIORELLO!, a musical, with book by Jerome Weidman and George Abbott, music by Jerry Bock, and lyrics by Sheldon Harnick. Staged by Mr. Abbott; produced by Robert E. Griffith and Harold S. Prince; choreography by Peter Gennaro; scenery, costumes and lighting by William and Jean Eckart; musical direction, Hal Hastings; orchestrations, Irwin Kostal; dance music arranged by Jack Elliott; production stage manager, Ruth Mitchell. At the Broadhurst Theatre.

Announcer	Del Horstmann
Fiorello	Tom Bosley
Neil	Bob Holiday
Morris	Nathaniel Frey
Mrs. Pomerantz	Helen Verbit
Mr. Lopez	H. F. Green
Mr. Zappatella	David Collier
Dora	Pat Stanley
Marie	Patricia Wilson
Ben	Howard Da Silva
Vina	Pat Turner
Floyd	Mark Dawson
Sophie	Lynn Ross
Thea	Eileen Hanley
Secretary	Mara Landi
Senator	Frederic Downs
Commissioner	Michael Quinn
Frankie Scarpini	Michael Scrittorale
Mizzi	Eileen Rodgers
Florence	Deedy Irwin
Reporter	Julian Patrick
Tough Man	David London
Derby	Bob Bernard
Francis	Stanley Simmonds
Judge Carter	Joseph Toner

ballets that Peter Gennaro has composed are spontaneous and exhilarating, and the moody waltz toward the end of the first act has the simple beauty of a Gotham rite.

The cast could not be more winning or in better voice. Patricia Wilson, devoted but also retiring as the selfless secretary; Pat Stanley, grinning, droll and hoydenish as one of the La Guardia fans; Ellen Hanley, lovely and gentle as the first wife; Nathaniel Frey as an office law clerk who complains of overwork to his wife but takes orders with a kind of bulky affection; Mark Dawson as a thick-headed cop; Eileen Rodgers as the bellowing of "Gentleman Jimmy" (Walker)—lead a performance that skips along triumphantly.

Years ago the Little Flower took a frowzy, depressed city of political hacks and brought it to life by the fire of his own personality. New York was interesting because he stood at the head of it. Bringing musical comedy to life on Broadway is an achievement of lesser order. But the Little Flower is the most dynamic figure in the musical arcades this season. Again, everyone feels happier because his enkindling spirit is with us again.

successful campaign for Mayor on the Fusion ticket. "Fiorello!" is substantially true to the record, including the first and second marriages.

Under Mr. Abbott's invincible stage direction, the whole show comes to life with gusto. It is extraordinary how right the period is for a comic carnival. Against raffish city backgrounds, well designed by the Eckarts, the sidewalk